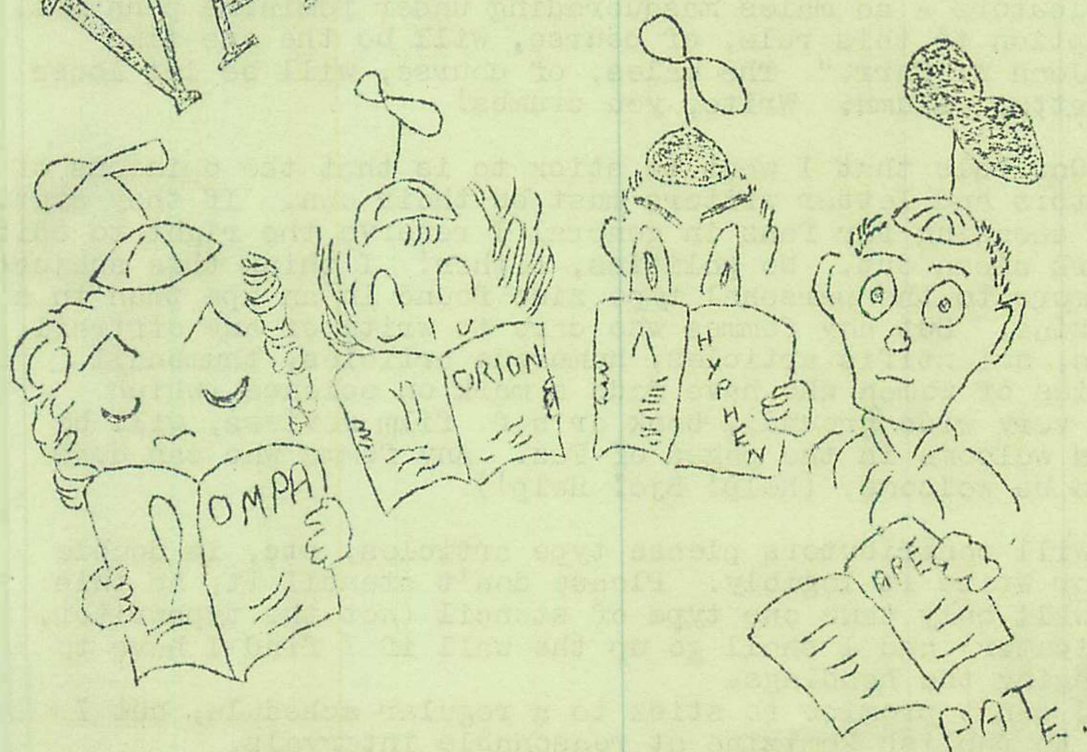


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ANNOUNCEMENT

You all probably know by now that Ethel Lindsay has given up the editorship of Femizine and that I have fallen heir to it. It seemed a shame that all the work that Ethel, Francis Evans, Pam Bulmer, Joy Sanderson, Daphne Buckmaster, and many other femmes put into the zine should vanish into limbo, so I ~~am~~ going to have a try at keeping up the good work.

The mixture will be almost the same as before. Only femmes as contributors - no males masquerading under feminine pennames. The exception to this rule, of course, will be the one-time editor "Joan W. Carr." The males, of course, will be let loose in the letter column. Write, you crumbs!

One rule that I want to stick to is that the opinions of contributors and letter writers must be their own. If they state they are speaking for fans in general I reserve the right to edit the remark clean out. No politics, either! I think this subject belongs more to the personal type zine found in an apa than in a general zine. But any femmes who care to write of any offtrail incidents, scientific articles, humorous articles, thumbnail biographies of women who have made a mark on science (which covers a very wide ground), book or s.f. film reviews, will be more than welcome in the pages of Fez. Any femme who can draw will also be welcome. (Help! Bjo! Help!).

Will contributors please type articles, etc, in double spacing or write it legibly. Please don't stencil it, as this machine will only take one type of stencil (not the typewriter, the duplicator) and I shall go up the wall if I find I have to keep changing the headings.

I can't promise to stick to a regular schedule, but I will try to publish Femizine at reasonable intervals.

TALKING POINT

First of all a big hello to the new members who have joined since I last appeared in O.M.P.A. although I am sorry to see some of the stalwarts fall by the wayside.

I am not sure what sort of an issue this will turn out to be, but this time round there will be no reviews. I feel if I am going to review I should say something about all those mailings I've missed, and to review half a dozen batches of magazines is more than I can face at the moment. Next time round, huh? This time I'll put the odd comment or two I want to make in this column.

Members who have stayed in the Association throughout my long, loud silence will observe that this is being typed in Pica. Since the other typewriter could never seem to hold a stencil straight I traded it in and got myself an Imperial 5. A nice little machine, but it has so many blasted gadgets on it that I'm still not sure whether I'm pounding a typer or playing a Wurlitzer. And I am assuming that a new typer is like a new car - it needs running in. So far I have been unable to get more than fifty five to sixty words a minute out of the machine.

There were several reasons for my silence in fandom. One was partly disgust, another was that I seemed to be doing an awful lot of official stuff in fandom. Now I did this because I was asked by fans to do so, but it meant that I had to take fandom more seriously than it should be taken. It also meant that nearly every minute of my spare time was taken up with fannish activities. I tried to cram more mundane activities in the time as well and one night I was taken completely by surprise by an attack of tachycardia. This annoyed me considerably as I knew very well that I had a good sound heart. I ignored the attack - and had another a week later. This time I thought I'd better ask a doctor what the hell was happening and he told me in no uncertain terms. My heart was quite sound, but it wouldn't be if I didn't slow up a bit. "Pack up or crack up" was the doc's verdict. It seemed that although I was feeling perfectly all right and knew what I was doing (at no time was I so sick or in so much pain that I "didn't know what I was saying" as was remarked when I disagreed - with good reason - about something that was said at a meeting) what I was actually doing was living on physical and nervous reserves and the day came when I used up all my physical reserves.

This was all very aggravating, especially as I was going to be married in September, so something had to be cut and my fannish activity was. I remained editor of the B.S.F.A. and although I gave the names of those who helped me on this at the Easter Con, a

number of fans weren't present, so I don't think my thanks to the following would come amiss here: Ella Parker (lang may her lum reek), Sandra Hall, Tikki Hall, Honey Keith-Elliott, Mike Moorcock, John Phillifent, Doc Weir, Ken and Pam Bulmer, Peter MacIntyre and Dick Ellingsworth. Tikki and Peter volunteered for the most mundane jobs of all - stapling and enveloping, and Honey assisted by her unfailing humour and wonderful fund of stories. I swear she would have made even Buster Keaton laugh his head off.

"The most wasted of all days is that on which one has not laughed!"
 Nicolas Chamfort - Maximes et Pensées

And talking of Honey's stories, this is as good a place as any to quote a couple. We were talking one night and the subject got round to ships, which reminded Honey of her voyage to South America in a cargo steamer with limited passenger accommodation. The captain was a bachelor and reasonably good looking, but rather glum on this voyage as his second cousin (female) had come along for the ride in the hope of snaffling the captain. She went the wrong way about in trying to interest him by always talking of her delicate health. There was another more attractive woman on board, a secretary, but this one had no idea of how to use her charm or attractiveness. The few passengers started wondering among themselves as to which of these two women would get the captain. "Well, which of them did, Honey?" asked Tikki. "My dear," replied Honey, "his cousin was always so pale and uninteresting and the secretary was so dumb that I got him myself."

The other story started when Honey asked me if I'd come across many snooty females when I was in the WRAF. I replied that I had, but fortunately only a few and, in any case, if we could work a posting for them somewhere where they would be cut down to size we did so. "Your powers-that-be sent a whole lot of the snooty ones to the west Indies," said Honey, and I said that we tried to get them as far away as possible.

From this conversation came the following tale. While living at Nassau Honey was introduced to the American Attaché, a rather stuffy redhaired Bostonian. One Christmas Eve Honey threw a party and on Christmas morning she was sound asleep on the verandah when a friend - a professional footballer - arrived at 8 a.m. This was an uncivilised time and Honey said so, so the footballer sat down and started amusing himself with a toy xylophone that had been bought for one of the girls. Just before ten the Bostonian arrived in full regalia with his girl friend to enquire if Honey were going to church. Honey, surrounded by empty champagne bottle and a xylophone playing footballer obviously was not. For weeks she wondered if she had shocked him to the core and if she were now non persona grata as far as the

Bostonian was concerned. Then he left the island to escort a party of Waafs from New York to Nassau and when he finally returned with them he looked worn down. It seemed they had done nothing but complain about the American way of life all the way from New York - it had not occurred to them that most Americans would have felt equally as strange in Britain.

"Pride, the never failing vice of fools". Alexander Pope.

However, someone gave a party to welcome them to the island and at this party they revealed that their snootiness was only "side" and that truly they had nothing but a vulgar pretentiousness. Their host was American and they committed an appalling breach of manners by carping and criticising things American. They eventually got round to complaining about the tea and how it was made in awful little bags. At this point, Honey, thoroughly exasperated, retorted "We threw one good tea party." Whereupon, the American Attache from Boston came over to her and, without saying a word, bowed and solemnly shook her hand.

To get back to fandom. The front cover of this Vagary has been run off for eighteen months - I did intend to put out an issue, ~~but~~ more or less explained why I didn't in the last issue of Off Trails I edited. At one point I was deliberating whether to resign from OMPA, but decided to stay out for a few mailings instead. I had intended to get a magazine in the last mailing, but just couldn't make it in time. I was foiled by enteritis, of all revolting things, which was followed by an attack of muscular rheumatism in the right arm and which was very stubborn about going away. There were other things, too, like getting married, and commuting between London and Cheltenham used up a lot of time.

Again, this house was all right for a bachelor, but I cast a very unfavourable eye on the bath and the room it was in. It was a very old-fashioned high sided bath that had been fitted in the room that should have been a kitchen by the previous tenant, who had moments of mad enthusiasm when he built walls of cardboard and fitted ends to drains that consisted of old tobacco tins and insulating tape. But the bath - it reminded me too much of George Joseph Smith and his unfortunate brides. In fact, I wouldn't have been surprised if this had not been one of the baths he used, so Bill got a more up to date bath and built a nice little room in the basement for it. He had already fixed up the "bog" (powder room is its euphemism).

Then he asked if there would be room for my things in his study. I looked at his small study, smiled sweetly, and told him I had a typewriter and a duplicator, plus stencils and stacks of paper. "I think I can fit them in," said Bill. "Can you fit in

six hundred books as well?" I asked. When he picked himself up off the floor he suggested that he could turn the end room past the bathroom into a study. This was before he had managed to get the new bath for the proper room. The room he suggested had been used by the last tenant for odds and ends - I think it had been added to the house as an afterthought - and Bill had not used it at all. We got busy at the weekends, papered the walls, did some painting and Bill built a desk for me that an executive would not be ashamed to have. He also built bookcases, but since then he has gone out with a desperate look in his eye and bought another bookcase for me. (I wonder when I am going to find time to read them all?

"The true University of these days is a collection of books."
 Thomas Carlyle - Heroes and Hero Worship

When he had completed the desk I said it was too nice to do duplicating on, so the next time I arrived home I found a duplicating bench fitted up in the study. It was a very solid piece of wood and I wondered where he had managed to get it from. It was the old door that he had taken from the bog, planed down, varnished and fitted with drawers. So now I am wondering if I am the only fan who does the duplicating on a lavatory door. Modern novelists would love a situation like that, of course, as that's as far as their imaginations seem to go these days.

He has also built a porch downstairs and at the moment is busy converting the large ex-bathroom into a reasonably sized kitchen. The present kitchen is too small for Bill, me and Selina the Cat who, incidentally, decided that my study is her boudoir. One day I said to Bill that either he and Selinacat would have to go on a diet or we would have to have a bigger kitchen. This remark brought an outraged screech from the cat, who let it be known that she was not going to diet for any damned human and if the subject were mentioned again she would pack her bags and leave. So Bill started building a better kitchen.

Since I drafted the above the work has been completed and Selinacat is now the proud possessor of a nice, new kitchen. We are allowed to use it on sufferance.

All this and there was a quite a lot of stuff that I had been wanting to do for the past four years, but commitments in fandom prevented me from doing so, so I at last took time out and did some non-fannish things - I even wrote some letters. (Okay, okay, Dick Ellington, I know I still owe you a letter).

There are one or two points I would like to answer in this

from
 issue, stemming/comments that were made in other Vagaries.
 For instance, in Vagary 9 I published a letter from Paul Hammett about the nuclear weapons. In a previous issue I stated that I believed in retaining the bomb, but that the tests should be stopped. After all, we know the damned things work. I repeated that statement in Vagary 9, when I printed Paul's letter, and soon after the mailing I had a letter from Joy stating that she was glad I had changed my mind about the bomb. I wrote back pointing out that I had done nothing of the kind.

Now, Joy, you chose to ignore this letter and published in an issue of your Ompazine that you were glad I had come round to "your way of thinking". Frankly, the possibility of my coming round to your way of thinking is extremely remote and I'll repeat again that I have not changed my mind - I still think we should retain what weapons we have, but that the tests should stop as there have been far too many of them already. It is a fat lot of good you having eyes that can see more Pleiades (Robert Graves' spelling and why should I quibble with such a scholar) than normally sighted people - or people who wear corrective lens, as I do - if they can't read an article without getting hold of the wrong end of the stick.

"It is a stupidity second to none, to busy oneself with the correction of the world." Molière. *Le Misanthrope*.

Next point I wanted to clear up - ah, yes, Daphne, in your Ompazine some time back you took a dim view of my remark that I thought Bertrand Russell a woolly minded idealist (more about him later) and I quote you "As a matter of interest, may we know just how many of Bertrand Russell's works you have read, which have led to your contempt for him? I have read three books, "Nightmares of Eminent Persons" being the only title I can remember as it was about the most readable of the three and not quite so dull and pompous as the others. I like clever writing but not clever-clever writing. I have also read occasional articles and essays by him. However, you asked me this and then waded straight in and criticised the play "Irma la Douce" - a play which you had not seen. You said it appeared to be the sort of thing a prude would enjoy - but if the prudes had had their way the play would not be running. You should know me well enough to know that I am not a prude - unless having a violent dislike of modern novels in which either most of the action takes place in the lavatory and there are are long dissertations on the bodily functions or the homosexual is damned near canonised. If to dislike that sort of thing (and four letter Anglo-Saxon obscenities) is being a prude then I am one and I don't mind admitting it.

"Irma la Douce" is not a musical play that concentrates on the bodily functions and it treats sex quite lightly (the main characters being a poule and a mec). It is mainly satirical and concerns the mec's attempts to keep the poule to himself completely because he is genuinely in love with her. He disguises himself as a Mr. Oscar and offers her 10,000 francs if he is the only one to receive her favours. She agrees and hands the money over to the mec in the morning who gives it back to her in the evening when he is once again disguised as Mr. Oscar. Unfortunately, it becomes too much for him and he decides to dispose of Mr. Oscar. There is only one snag - he has made Mr. Oscar such a well known character that when the latter disappears the mec is charged with his murder. There is a gloriously funny courtroom scene and another funny scene on the penal island where he is sent for his own murder. All through the play there are lovely remarks in which pseudo intellectualism is satirized and the humbug of the powers-that-be and - er - prudery is ridiculed. In fact, the play is a very witty satire and the only thing I did not care for in it was the line of wriggling men outside the Hotel Rapide. This, of course, is the British idea of how the French behave, but in the version still running in Paris the men do not wriggle.

"Though by whim, envy, or resentment led,/ They damn those authors whom they never read." Charles Churchill. 1731-1764.

The play has now been running in London for well over two years and no London theatre audience will keep a play going that depends merely on crudities and coarse comments. For a play to run that long it has to be good. The Sunday Times gave it another review a couple of months ago and it was a very good write up.

I must admit, Daphne, that I was startled by your comments on a play you had not seen. It is not what one would call logical, is it?

Now for Bertrand Russell. You seem quite cross that I should think of him as a woolly minded idealist. Well, that's your view and you're entitled to it, but perhaps I had better give one or two reasons. He was against the first world war, saying that Britain should remain neutral and let the Germans have a quick victory. He said if that had happened we would not have had Nazis or Communists. I don't know about that. Hitler, Mussolini and Stalin were already in the world and I think that when you get a fanatic determined to be the "big I am" nothing is going to stop him, either losing or winning a war, or causing one. A fanatic with a desire to be the big "I am" is a danger -

both the one who wants to be a big frog in a little pool or the one who wants to rule the world. In either case, be it a club, a society, or a nation the usual attitude is "If I can't run it, I'll ruin it." All the first world war did was to bring things to a head more quickly - these things would have come, anyway. In the second world war Bertrand Russell was all for the scrap - I think most of us realised it was a question of freedom or concentration camps, so he was going along with the majority there.

But some time back he became President of the Nuclear Disarmament Campaign. Before this he had advocated that a preventive war might be made against communism, against Soviet Russia. In a television interview, broadcast after he became President of the NDC, he admitted this and said he still thought so and that it was not inconsistent with what he thought now. He thought pressure should have been brought to bear on Russia before it had nuclear weapons and if they had not given way to have used the atom bomb on them, saying that the A-bomb was not nearly so dangerous as the H-bomb. No? The H-bomb needs the A-bomb to touch it off and most of the radioactive filth is thrown out by the former. And he still thought this while he was President of the NDC.

"FANATICISM IS THE DANGER OF THE WORLD, AND ALWAYS HAS BEEN, AND HAS DONE UNTOLD HARM." BERTRAND RUSSELL. T.V. INTERVIEW MAR.'59

In October Bertrand Russell resigned as President of the NDC because he said it was impossible to work with the national chairman of the Campaign. Earl Russell, in September, had announced a civil disobedience campaign against nuclear weapons. Canon Collins (the national chairman) and the executive of the Campaign opposed the policy. While Canon Collins was on holiday (after signing a joint statement with Earl Russell in which the two leaders had agreed to work together) the President resigned because he said he could not work with the Chairman. A spokesman at Campaign Headquarters said "The Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament is not able to support a campaign for civil disobedience." A very sensible view, too. What would have happened if the campaign for civil disobedience had got under way? Possibly every layabout, morose jerk and thug in the country would have used it for their own ends - certainly not to help the NDC.

That is why I think Bertrand is woolly minded and it is the sort of remarks he has made that has made the word "intellectual" almost as obscene as the word in "Lady Chatterley's Lover" which caused a court case. There is nothing wrong in being an intellectual - it's the tomfool pseudo intellectuals who cause the trouble.

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"They have sown the wind and they shall reap the whirlwind!"
Hosea. 8:7

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And how many really believed in what they/ marching for? How many of them could honestly say that they had the blazing sincerity of Paul Hammett? How many screeched their heads off not because they believed, but were merely saying "Look, everybody, I'm well to the fore. Join me, but don't forget I'm the one who first did it and appoint me your leader accordingly." What did the Crusaders do but rampage all over Europe and Asia and fanatically kill many fellow Christians and show far more intolerance than those of the faith they were out to destroy? I know at least two people who firmly denied they were Communists, but ceased to take an interest in the NDC when the Communists withdrew their support.

So nuclear disarmament is all very well, but what happens then? Will wars be fought with so-called conventional weapons?? Wars that may drag on for years? The tests of the nuclear weapons have proved even to the fanatical leaders of nations that there are no victors in a nuclear war. Therefore it is not worth starting one. But there could be a victor in a "conventional" war. The question is - who would it be? Does it boil down to the possession of nuclear weapons and peace and freedom. Or will it be case of conventional weapons, a war and possible slavery? We have nuclear weapons and we know they work, so I think it would be much more sensible to get the tests banned. Why keep testing something that is known to work and needlessly throw more filth into the atmosphere? Platform kicked under table until next time round.

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Speaking generally now, but still on this subject of nuclear disarmament. The NDC held its usual Easter rally, marching from Aldermaston to Trafalgar Square. Being curious I went along with Bill to see this - he had already suggested to Don Ford a day or two before that he might like to go along and get a few photographs. Don went on ahead of us and Bill and I arrived in the Square a few minutes before two o'clock. Bill nearly had a fit when I saw Don almost immediately over by the National Gallery, but heck! how could one miss seeing the Cincinnati Giant?

It was a mixed crowd who were there before the marchers arrived and to give the NDC credit, it was extremely well organised. The crowds consisted of supporters, those like myself who wanted to see just what sort of people belong to the NDC, and holiday makers who had no views either way, but being in London were curious to have a look. Before the marchers arrived there were 55,000 people in the Square and then 45,000 marched in. They were from all over the country, although I believe about 15,000 had actually marched all the way from Aldermaston, the rest joining in when the march neared its end, a great many in Whitehall, only a stone's throw away from the Square.

"Fanatics have their dreams, wherewith they weave A paradise for a sect." John Keats. The Fall of Hyperion

The organisers and those who had marched all the way were sincere, there was no doubt about that, but they were rather lost among the mob of exhibitionists who joined the march at the last moment and whose only aim was not to campaign against the H.bomb, but to display their nasty unwashed faces and loud mouths. Some of the beatniks I saw on that march (one of whom I saw later in Villiers Street still showing herself off and not caring a tuppenny damn about the rally) did not have the dust of the Aldermaston march on them, but the filth of months - possibly years. God knows, I'm an extremely casual dresser myself, but it defeats me how anyone can be proud of displaying him/herself in dirt encrusted clothes and with filthy hands, faces and feet (and probably bodies under the greasy clothes). It was very unfortunate that it was these people who were the most noticeable and the on-lookers were so busy making rude comments on this lot that it went almost unnoticed that the really sincere contingents from various parts of the country (including some trade unionists) were neatly and soberly dressed. I heard afterwards (but don't know if it is true or not) that this will be last organised Easter March as too many people who are not really interested in the campaign are using it just to see and be seen

Incidentally, the crowd of 100,000 was the biggest ever seen in Trafalgar Square, bigger even than the two armistice nights, and it was very quiet. I suppose that was the most impressive thing about it - the attitude of many of the onlookers who, although may not have agreed, felt that the other chap had a right to his opinion. There was an incident (coming to it later) but the person concerned was not interested in marching or watching.

I can admire the sincerity of people who will march that distance for a belief, but I just cannot agree with them. After last year's march a very impartial newspaper (one of the few we have) ran a leader and comments that the march was a shifting of guilt. In other words, it was the West who used the first atom bomb and started stockpiling atomic weapons, and no matter how many protest marches there are by people who shout "Ban the Bomb", they cannot shift the guilt off their shoulders on to ours. We are all equally guilty and nothing will ever alter the fact that we used atomic weapons first. The thing that seems to be overlooked these days is that the two atomic bombs brought the war to an abrupt end and saved our men and women in Jap hands months, possibly years, of misery, starvation, torture and humiliation. Have a people who treat men and women as worse than beasts in the field the right to expect better treatment themselves? At least those bombs enabled the Japs to "surrender honourably". Damn! I've digressed again.

"Let him who desires peace prepare for war." Vegetius. 4th Cent.

To get back to the main subject, the newspaper had a point when it said we are all equally guilty and no amount of marching is going to shift the guilt or cure the increased cancer rate. That same newspaper had another leader this year and since it expressed views that I hold myself in a far better way than I am able to I am going to quote some of it. Here goes:

"....Shoulder to shoulder with the churchmen and the Quakers, The Tories and the Liberals, the earnest and and the eccentric, they produce a vivid caricature of a pilgrimage. It merits our attention if not our respect. The marchers agree only on one point: that Britain should get rid of its nuclear weapons...But the marchers present no new argument; they merely make a demand. Their appeal is not to reason but to emotion; their behaviour is intended to move us by a mixture of the bizarre and the macabre. They spoil their cause by making it appear the persuasion of odd-looking and strange-sounding people. If the Christian-pacifist element could be seen alone in all its simplicity, the effect would be more impressive. Our own view in this argument

is simply stated. The supreme purpose of policy should be to prevent war. If the possession of nuclear weapons can avert the devastation and cruelty caused by conventional weapons in the last war, its moral justification is obvious. There is just a chance that the balance of terror will kill the habit of war, or at least limit it. We accept the arguments for general disarmament, but we do not expect our enemies to disarm for a long time to come. If Britain "gave a lead" in nuclear disarmament, we know of no reason to believe that others would follow. The control and inspection of arms towards which the great Powers are moving inch by inch offer, in our view, the best hope of progress and growing confidence. Those who say that Britain alone should take giant strides towards a bombless world are making something difficult and dangerous look easy and safe. That may be progressive, but it is blatantly dishonest." End of quote.

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And how many really believed in what they/ marching for? How many of them could honestly say that they had the blazing sincerity of Paul Hammett? How many screeched their heads off not because they believed, but were merely saying "Look, everybody, I'm well to the fore. Join me, but don't forget I'm the one who first did it and appoint me your leader accordingly." What did the Crusaders do but rampage all over Europe and Asia and fanatically kill many fellow Christians and show far more intolerance than those of the faith they were out to destroy? I know at least two people who firmly denied they were Communists, but ceased to take an interest in the NDC when the Communists withdrew their support.

So nuclear disarmament is all very well, but what happens then? Will wars be fought with so-called conventional weapons?? Wars that may drag on for years? The tests of the nuclear weapons have proved even to the fanatical leaders of nations that there are no victors in a nuclear war. Therefore it is not worth starting one. But there could be a victor in a "conventional" war. The question is - who would it be? Does it boil down to the possession of nuclear weapons and peace and freedom. Or will it be case of conventional weapons, a war and possible slavery? We have nuclear weapons and we know they work, so I think it would be much more sensible to get the tests banned. Why keep testing something that is known to work and needlessly throw more filth into the atmosphere? Platform kicked under table until next time round.

Since I have been in Cheltenham, Bill has dragged me to the cinema more often than I used to go, and I am catching up on a lot of ancient history. (An Italian company is having a field day with it). He has also taken me to the theatre since it reopened here. They have put on some good plays, as well as some very crummy ones, but they made a magnificent effort the other week with Flecker's "Hassan." Although I had read extracts I did not know the main plot, and when torture was discussed so much I began to get worried and at one point was on the verge of retiring to the bar as I thought they were going to show it on stage. It was "done" offstage fortunately, but I got the shock of my life when the woman behind me said indignantly to her friend "Well! They might have shown us the torture." She reminded me of the man on the NDC day who, before the march started, deliberately shouldered people aside on the steps of the National Gallery, although an aisle had been kept in the centre of the steps for visitors to the Gallery. That man would not have had the guts to shoulder anyone if he had not thought we were all pacifists who were willing to lay down and let him walk over us. I was quick to say that I wasn't a goddam pacifist and others said so, too. By the time he reached the Gallery he was walking in the path that had been kept clear. Great grief! If we have people like that man and the woman who wanted to see the torture in this country, they must have them in other countries, and if we disarmed they would have a field day.

"No passion so effectually robs the mind of all its power of acting and reasoning as fear." Edmund Burke.

But getting back to the cinema, I notice Ethel made mention of that glorious comedy "Make Mine Mink". I can support her statement that it is worth seeing and I think that it is because such care has been taken with all the parts, even down to the smallest. I am not going to say any more than she has otherwise it will give too much away to those of you who haven't seen it, but would like to see it.

We also saw both the Oscar Wilde films and thought that ^{the} one starring Robert Morley was rather a dead loss - it was Robert Morley being Robert Morley and trying to kid us he was Oscar Wilde. In that particular film the effeminacy of Lord Alfred Douglas was very well portrayed by John Neville (not surprising as he is one of the best actors at the Old Vic), but the evilness of the nasty little brute was brought out more in the Finch film, far and away the better of the two films. Peter Finch had literally soaked himself into the part of Wilde so well that he really did look like him and his magnificent acting brought out the tragedy of a man who was an abnormal genius. Again, care had been taken with all the parts and the feeling that

"Robbie" Ross had for Wilde was very delicately portrayed. On the whole, I suppose it was a sad film because it showed the persecution and destruction of a genuine invert by one man who was more than a little mad (Queensberry) and other men who were nothing but filthy perverts. Wilde, of course, never had much of a chance from the moment he was born. His mother badly wanted a girl and when Wilde was born she just refused to face the fact that she had a son and dressed the poor wretch in petticoats until he was eleven years old.

I can feel sorry for these genuine inverts of either sex, but for every invert there seems to be half a dozen perverts and I think the latter despicable. Possibly our laws were framed to protect the public from the perverts, but it is this breed that usually gets away with it - it is the genuine invert, who needs medical treatment, who is crucified instead. But although I am tired of him being crucified in the newspapers, I am more than tired of him being canonized in novels. Despite TV there is still a very large reading public and I suspect these books with themes of unnatural love may horrify the inverts who would rather that their sickness was not used by an author to complete his wordage quota, but are welcomed with great joy by the perverts. And it is the perverts, as a rule, who corrupt the kids. One does not mind the occasional "queer" in a story if it gives it verisimilitude, but why write about that and nothing but that? I know of only one author who has written on this theme delicately and without offence and that is Mary Renault. ("The Last of the Wine", which was about ancient Greece, anyway).

But what the devil has got into our authors? Unless one picks up a whodunit or a science fiction story a great number of the books seem to be about quarrels taking place while one of the participants is in the lavatory (with appropriate descriptions, of course), people whose profane vocabulary is limited to one four letter word, angry young men and women (who have had a damned sight more chances than their prewar equivalents) drearily holding forth about their frustrations in a suburban back street while Dad is busy doing a take over in the City, or everyone being equally dreary about sex without love.

Which brings me, of course, to the book about which there has been such a furore, "Lady Chatterley's Lover." In a way, I am sorry the publishers won the case, not so much because of the theme, but because it is not one of Lawrence's great works. I have asked various people who have read it what their opinion of the book is and the older ones have said that it was not the sort of book they would like their teenage children to read and, in any case, it was damned dull. The younger people I have asked

(including one fifteen year old) have said the same thing. The book was dull.

Lawrence was obviously sincere in what he wanted to say, but he did not quite put it over. Because of my long spell in the Forces I knew thousands of women and occasionally they will talk quite frankly, which is why I think that there are quite a number of women who may see the point that Lawrence was probably trying to make. The point that a normally sexed woman, if tied to an impotent, undersexed, or just can't-be-bothered husband, can be driven slowly mad with frustration, can even be physically ill through it, can still love her husband yet be driven elsewhere by her body's needs. Because it is more than a want, it is a need and Nature will drive both men and women to desperate lengths, although they may be screaming inwardly because they still want the beauty with it, too.

I once worked for a couple of doctors and those of you who have doctor friends may know that many of the women who turn up on the operating table are there because their physical love life has gone awry. Some of the reports are tragic. The ache in the ovaries, the feeling of sickness, the constant headaches, and the gradual build up of "nerves" to an almost hysterical pitch. This I believe Lawrence understood and that he wrote his novel out of compassion for a woman and a husband caught up in such a life but unfortunately he missed the mark, and in wanting to show how beautiful sex could be, he made it coarse instead. It can be beautiful - it should be beautiful, because we have minds and souls that can rise above sheer animalism, but is there any gift Nature has given us that humanity has not abused, particularly the deepest emotion we have?

There is no such thing as a moral or an immoral book. Books are well written, or badly written. Oscar Wilde.

Again, Lawrence failed to be consistent. His gamekeeper talks in broad, coarse dialect at one point and at another uses the language of a college don. If only Lawrence had described the scenes between Lady Chatterley and the gamekeeper in the language of love instead of the language of lust, more readers would have understood the point he was trying to make. The point that both men and women need love in its physical form and will, in desperation, go elsewhere if their partners can't - or won't - be bothered with them. That is not Life's greatest sin - it is Life's greatest tragedy. Lawrence wrote the book to arouse our compassion and ninety per cent of the time succeeded in only arousing our disgust or our mirth.

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It is a sad thing that/author who could, at times, use beautiful prose had to resort to four letter words whose connotations are for lust, not love. Yet it is not so much the meaning of the word, but it is so confoundedly ugly. Now that it is published in half the books one picks up I suppose it will be used even more by the ill-bred, ill-mannered, ignorant youths who infest the cinemas at weekends, who sit as quiet as mice when the lights are up, but immediately drown all the dialogue with their own foul mouths the moment the gutless, witless slobbs have the cover of darkness.

The book, of course, is being sold out as fast as it is being put on the stands, two to three hundred people queuing for it at the bookshops. I am sorry, but I cannot believe that every one of them is a lover of literature. These people want it for the dirt they hope is in it. In other words, the mob hasn't changed much in the last two thousand years, the only difference being is that nowadays they have to pay for their bread and circuses.

If only the world would learn to laugh at itself. Nature has given us two great gifts - Love and Laughter. We abuse the one and don't know how to use the other.

I see Bill is getting the paintbrushes out and this time I hope the cat stays out of the way. The last time she plonked her tail against a newly painted door and I had to get it off with detergent before she licked it and poisoned herself. Unfortunately, she bolted before I could rinse it off and as the night was wet, I had a horrible vision of Selina leaping on to the bed in the middle of the night, frothing at the tail. Those of you have wondered who the boss is in this house since I've been married can be answered in one word. Selina.

As a matter of fact, Selina is a very intelligent cat, but as I am pushed for time, I cannot say much about her. Besides, it will have to be in fulsome praise of her as I am sure the damned cat can read (we daren't talk about Samuel Johnson's cat in front of her in case she insists on oysters, too) and my life won't be worth living if I don't say something nice about her. Mind you, she hasn't found out yet that I allow her to creep under the coverlet because she makes a useful hotwater bottle.

As usual, I am doing this issue in my usual mad scramble and have probably either missed half the points I wanted to make or else obscured them too much. If so, all I can do is apologise and try to do better next time round.

- WITCHCRAFT -

YESTERDAY

AND

TODAY

BY

SANDRA

HALL



The term "witch", according to my dictionary, means a sorceress, a female magician using evil powers. For the purpose of this article "witchcraft" will be assumed to mean a study of evil. It is not being discussed as "the old religion of the horned moon goddess" which one (in)famous warlock has stated in his most recent book. The old religion was essentially a sun-and-moon worship which, with all its faults, has no relation whatever to witchcraft today.

Though the word "witch" derives from the old English "Wicca" meaning anyone who practises magic, a male practitioner of witchcraft is known today as a warlock. According to Malleus Maleficarum, witches were anthropophagists. They were capable of raising hailstorms and causing sterility in man or beast. They consorted carnally with demons to produce fiendish offspring. They could transport themselves at will, strike an enemy dead by lightning, influence court decrees, bewitch by mere look and cause calamities and sudden death. It was because of these supposed powers that witchcraft was punishable by torture of the Holy Inquisition.

According to legend, an assembly of witches and warlocks is held every three months, i.e. February 2nd, April 30th (Walpurgis Night) Midsummer Eve and October 31st. By anointing themselves with such delicacies as the fat of slain children they rode through the air on broomsticks, rakes, goats, etc. to the Sabbat where Satan himself presided as guest of honour. Satan is usually depicted in the form of a goat or, occasionally, a cat or a raven. Homage was paid to the Grand Master by the osculum infame. Infernal baptisms then took place, followed by an all-night ending at cock-crow.

Because of such legends the Holy Church in the Middle Ages took considerable interest in the spreading evil. Witch-hunting was the practice of searching out one of the suspected witches, or several of them, torturing them to the point of confession (often death) and then condemning them to painful deaths. Numberless unfortunates met their deaths through suspected witchcraft during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Such atrocities occurred in France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Denmark and Lancashire in England. Trials and convictions on fantastic degrees of hearsay and incidental evidence were carried out on men and women accused of witchcraft. A similar, though not so vicious, campaign was carried out in Southern England, while the Salem Witch-hunts of New England were notorious for the ruthlessness of their prosecution.

In seventeenth century England witch-hunting was closely associated with the persecution of Roman Catholics. According to numerous diaries, biographies, state trial records, memoirs and parliamentary records, catholicism and witchcraft were considered synonymous.

However, witchcraft in modern England, or any other country, is a slightly different thing today. The last witchcraft trial proper was held in 1926.* Until recently the witchcraft trials were still in force and were repealed by the Socialist Government in 1951. If a newly formed coven is registered as a religious gathering or even a revival, no laws are broken and no prosecutions can take place. Straightforward black magic is still illegal under common law, i.e. if you are caught desecrating a church you'll go to gaol not because of practising black magic, but on a charge of disturbing the peace. On studying such information as is available one is at once struck by the alarming rise in the rate of formations of new covens. The rate at the time of writing is between three and four a month. Assuming a coven consists of thirteen people (which it should), that means between forty and fifty people are turning to witchcraft as a religion each month. Analysis reveals that these covens are usually out to (a) have a few sex orgies, (b) get members' names in the Sunday papers and (c) obtain the awed respect of their neighbours. The last of these is the strongest motive of all - power over other people.

It must be admitted that these cults are messy, but as a whole they can hardly be called an occult danger. The really dangerous black lodges are very well hidden and would never settle for something as casual as witchcraft today really is. However, there is a constant danger that witchcraft will be used as a recruiting ground for something far more evil. In view of this and in view of the moral degeneration caused by these cults, surely the Witchcraft Act which was repealed in 1951 should be investigated, revised and brought back. I am not suggesting for a moment that people should be burnt at the stake or similarly tortured; I am suggesting that some effort is made to keep people away from paths which may so easily lead to more than is bargained for. The true black lodges will never be found by Scotland Yard. As fire fights fire, the black lodges should be left to the mercy of those qualified to deal with them. Witchcraft lectures and paperback books on the subject ought, where possible, to be kept out of the mind of the general public before a serious menace results.

Acknowledgements to H.E. Wedick, one black magician and one white magician who have both supplied facts for this article.

Sandra Hall.

* Since Sandra wrote this article we have been informed that the last witchburning took place in Mexico in 1957. I am not sure of the exact place - Mike Moorcock, do you know?

Note. I don't think I would entirely agree with Sandra on the banning of witchcraft lectures and paperback books on the subject. I think the more the public know about this the less likely it is to be gulled, and fewer people will find themselves blackmail victims because they dabbled in witchcraft out of sheer curiosity or because they were seeking a new thrill. Some the people who run these covens are not all that interested in witchcraft, but they are interested in how much they can screw out of a victim to keep them quiet.

There are certain psychic dangers. Yes, I would have laughed my head off fifteen years ago if someone had said that to me, but just over a dozen years ago I walked smack into one of the most evil places I have ever had the misfortune to be in, but I am not going into it in this issue -I daren't, I've only got two days to the deadline. More about it in the next issue. On the other hand, I have been in a place where the atmosphere is spiritually good, although I have heard it referred to as the "Blackest" spot in England. More about that later, too.

My acknowledgements to Sandra for writing the article for the magazine (she did it eighteen months ago as a matter of fact) and to Daphne, because it was an article in her magazine Esprit before it became ^{me}magazine (incidentally, congratulations on it, Daphne) that moved/ to ask Sandra to do some research. Also, my acknowledgements to Brenda Hopes, the invoice typist at the office, who drew the witch illustration for me. Mind you, I ~~am~~ not saying whether she will recognise her handiwork by the time I have finished wrecking it.

However, I am sorry I could not get a lot more meat in this issue as I have missed so many mailings, but if I try I shall miss this mailing as well. So until next time, a merry Christmas and a happy New Year.

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